

(Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 349, a resolution congratulating the Farm Credit System on the celebration of its 100th anniversary.

AMENDMENT NO. 3107

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3107 intended to be proposed to S. 2012, an original bill to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3120

At the request of Mr. KING, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3120 intended to be proposed to S. 2012, an original bill to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3133

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3133 intended to be proposed to S. 2012, an original bill to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. COTTON (for himself, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. HATCH, and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2514. A bill to require the Bureau of Justice Statistics to report on recidivism rates of Federal prisoners who are released early, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act that has been voted out of the Judiciary Committee.

There is much debate about the wisdom of this bill. That is, like most bills we discuss in this Chamber, a judgment call. But there cannot be debate over the facts of this bill. We have to be very clear on what this bill, by its own text, is designed to do.

Proponents of the bill often invoke four phrases to describe the felons to be released under the terms of the bill: "first-time," "nonviolent," "low-level," "drug possession" offenders. Yet none of these four terms is accurate.

By its text, the bill will apply sentence reductions not to first-time offenders but to repeat offenders—some many times over. These are felons who have made the conscious choice to commit crimes over and over.

By its text, the bill will not just apply to so-called "nonviolent offenders" but to thousands of violent felons and armed career criminals who have used firearms in the course of their drug felonies or crimes of violence.

By its text, the bill will reduce sentences not for those convicted of sim-

ple possession but for major drug traffickers—ones who deal in hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of heroin and thousands of pounds of marijuana. And let's be clear. Drug trafficking is not nonviolent, as the bill's proponents often claim. It is built on an entire edifice of violence, stretching from the narcoterrorists of South America to the drug-deal enforcers on our city streets. If you think dealing drugs on a street corner while armed with a gun is a nonviolent offense, you probably live in a rich suburb or a gated community.

By its text, this bill will apply to felons convicted as juveniles of murder, rape, assault, and other crimes for which they were justly tried as adults.

By its text, this bill will apply to repeat felons whose past crimes include kidnapping, carjacking, armed robbery, and other violent crimes.

By its text, this bill will make eligible for early release into America's communities thousands of drug traffickers and other violent felons. And when we catch such criminals going forward, we will not be able to keep them locked up for the same sentences.

It has been reported that the bill's sponsors are preparing to release a revised bill, one that would address some of the many shortcomings. Regarding this news, I thank the sponsors for acknowledging that the bill as passed by committee does, in fact, apply to serious drug traffickers and other violent felons. I look forward to evaluating the new legislative text, and I hope it addresses these problems. Until then, though, we can only examine more closely the bill as passed by the committee and its consequences.

Make no mistake, the consequences of this bill are all too predictable. Sadly, more than half of released prisoners are rearrested within 1 year, and 77 percent are rearrested within 5 years. We can be sure, then, that we will see more crimes committed by those who might be released early—thanks to this bill. That is indisputable. Those new crimes will wreak havoc on the citizens, families, and communities in each of our States.

This risk is not hypothetical. Sterile statistics do not adequately convey the severity of the threat of mass recidivism. Last month in Columbus, OH, a man named Wendell Callahan brutally killed his ex-girlfriend and her two young daughters. In what was described as a "stabbing rampage," Callahan murdered Erveena Hammonds, her 10-year-old daughter Anaesia, and Anaesia's little sister, 7-year-old Brea.

These murders were an atrocity, and they were completely avoidable. Wendell Callahan walked out of Federal prison in August 2014, but his original sentence should have kept him in jail until 2018. If he had been in jail instead of on the streets, a young family would still be alive today.

Callahan walked out of jail early because the U.S. Sentencing Commission reduced sentences retroactively for

hardened violent criminals like him. The Commission first reduced sentencing guidelines in 2007. It did so again in 2010 and again in 2014. That is three major systemic sentencing reductions in the span of a mere 7 years. The result is that 46,000 Federal convicts will walk from jail early. Wendell Callahan was one among that 46,000. There will be many more like him. While we pray against all odds that none of them go on to commit a triple-murder like Wendell Callahan did—or any other heinous crime—I am afraid our prayers will go unanswered, at least in part.

The U.S. Sentencing Commission is an independent judicial agency that provides uniform sentencing guidelines to judges. Congress didn't have a hand in those sentencing reductions, but with the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, the Senate would impose a fourth major sentencing reduction within 8 years—one that is deeper and broader than the reductions imposed by the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

This is badly misguided. The Senate would be launching a massive social experiment in criminal leniency without knowing the full consequences of the first three reductions imposed by the Sentencing Commissions. This experiment threatens to undo the historic drops in crime that we have seen over the last 25 years.

That drop in crime rate was no accident. It was the result of higher mandatory minimums put in place in the 1980s, coupled with vigilant policing strategies pioneered by scholars like Jim Wilson and practiced by elected leaders like Rudy Giuliani and other American mayors and law enforcement officials. The combination of mandatory minimums and innovative policing is not a haphazard anticrime strategy. It is one that was reached through tough trial-and-error performed at local, State, and, eventually, the Federal levels. It is one that arose from advocacy that originated in the communities and cities that were hardest hit by the drug trade. It is one that has a proven record of success, not in terms of crime rates but in terms of lives saved, families protected, and communities healed.

The connection between higher mandatory minimums and lower crime is often lost on those unfamiliar with this history or blinded by ideology. For example, in 1997 the New York Times reported: "Crime Keeps On Falling, but Prisons Keep On Filling." One year later, in 1998, the Times added: "Prison Population Growing Although Crime Rate Drops." In 2004 the Times reiterated yet again, just for good measure: "Despite Drop In Crime, An Increase In Inmates." You can't make this stuff up, yet it is real and appears to be all too soon forgotten.

Like most conservative achievements, the reduction in crime over the past generation is built on the hard lessons of experience. We should not lightly abandon the criminal justice wisdom accumulated over decades to the passing fashions of current thinking. We

should not blithely move from a proven strategy of accountability and vigilance to an experimental theory of leniency. We should not trade away concrete, hard-won gains when the results may be devastating to American communities.

The Senate and the American people need to consider any change to our sentencing laws with full information. We need to know if this sentencing leniency bill will return us closer to the days of the 1970s and 1980s, when our cities were besieged by the drug trade and whole communities were being rotted out as a result. We need to debate sentencing changes with all the data available to us, and we need to do this with eyes wide open.

That is why today, together with Senators HATCH, SESSIONS, and PERDUE, I am introducing the Criminal Consequences of Early Release Act. This is a simple but very needed bill. It will require the Federal Government to report on the recidivism rates of the 46,000 Federal inmates to be released early under the Sentencing Commission's reductions, and it will require the same reporting for any prisoners released early under any future reductions mandated by Congress.

The report required by this bill will make clear how many crimes are being committed by released felons who would otherwise still be in prison. It will make clear what types of crimes—from drug trafficking to assault to robbery to murder—are being committed by these felons. It will make clear in which States these crimes are occurring.

Currently this type of data is extremely hard to compile. It is not reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and any information we do have comes mostly through anecdotes and sporadic media reports. Full information on the criminal consequences of early release must be published in detail. Before voting on any bill to reduce sentences, Senators need to understand fully the criminal consequences of prior sentence reductions.

To hold Senators accountable for their votes, the American people need to understand how their communities are being affected. When the Federal Government decides to release thousands of violent criminals onto the streets, no legislator or official should be able to plead ignorance. If people are being killed, drugs trafficked, property stolen, and children kidnapped by felons who should have been in prison but instead are out on the streets, then the people in our States and communities deserve to know that.

I want to be clear. To those who support the Sentencing Reform Corrections Act, we are not in full disagreement. Like you, I oppose jail for first-time drug users with no prior record. It is vanishingly rare for such offenders to be prosecuted and jailed in the Federal system, of course, but it remains true that the better option for them—particularly if they are addicts—would

be drug treatment. Like you, I believe that our prisons should not be an anarchic jungle that is a danger to both prisoners and corrections officers. Like you, I believe that those prisoners who will someday complete their sentences and reenter society should be given a chance to rehabilitate and redeem themselves while in prison so they do not commit additional new crimes once they are out of prison. Like you, I do believe there exists a possibility of a manifestly unjust sentence.

So I suggest: Let's work on that bill. Let's work on a bill that identifies and addresses all first-time drug possession inmates in the Federal system but keeps drug traffickers and other violent offenders in prison to finish their sentences. Let's improve prison conditions and give prisoners a shot at redemption and a better life while protecting our communities. If you wish, let's work on a bill to speed the consideration of commutation and pardon applications because, if you want to undo manifestly unjust sentences, we can help the President use his constitutional power of pardon and commutation as a precise scalpel to identify and remedy those very rare cases of manifestly unjust sentences. What we should not do is use the blunt instrument of releasing thousands of violent felons and major drug traffickers back onto our streets early.

The President has a constitutional power to remedy unjust sentences, but you know what power he doesn't have? The power to bring back to life the victims who are murdered by prisoners released early or sentenced inadequately.

In the discussion about the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, there is much talk about legacy, and, in particular, a legacy of President Obama after he leaves office. If considerations of legacy should factor into the debate, I would close with this observation. Legacies are not necessarily positive. They can be negative and deeply tragic. If supporters of this bill and President Obama are wrong, if this grand experiment in criminal leniency goes awry, how many lives will be ruined and how many dead? How much of the anticrime progress of the last generation will be wiped away for the next?

Those are the questions we must ask as we consider this bill. If we ask them honestly, soberly, and with full information, we will invariably be led to one conclusion: We should not grant early release to thousands of drug traffickers and other violent criminals nor should we shorten their sentences in the future.

By Mr. MCCAIN (for himself and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2519. A bill to provide for incentives to encourage health insurance coverage, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, it has been more than 5 years since ObamaCare was signed into law. Since

then, the American people have only seen higher health care costs, less access, decreased quality of care, and fewer choices.

Every day I hear from Arizonans who have been forced to give up the health insurance plans they liked and now face skyrocketing monthly premiums and never-ending wait times for appointments. Moreover, I have spoken with small business owners across my State who have been forced to choose between complying with costly government mandates, laying off employees or, worse, closing their doors.

For 5 long years, the American people have been unfairly burdened by this failed law, and the negative effects are only expected to grow. According to the Department of Health and Human Service's own data, 24 insurance plans in the ObamaCare exchanges were expected to see double-digit rate hikes in 2016, while residents of Phoenix, AZ, were expected to see their premiums increase by roughly 19 percent. The highest average premium increase in Arizona was projected to reach a whopping 78 percent.

ObamaCare's numerous failures are well established. Take, for example, the President's broken promise that Americans who liked their health care plans and doctors could keep them; skyrocketing premiums and deductibles; 21 tax increases that both the CBO and the Joint Committee on Taxation predict would be passed on to the consumer; over \$1 billion wasted on failed ObamaCare-established health care co-ops; and an estimated 2 million full-time equivalent workers expected to lose their jobs by 2024, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

For these reasons, a majority of Americans today oppose the President's failed health care law. They are counting on us, their elected representatives in Congress, to fight to fully repeal and replace it. That is why I was proud to partner with my Republican colleagues in sending the first ObamaCare repeal to the President's desk. That is also why I am proud to stand before the Congress today to reintroduce the Empowering Patients First Act along with my friend, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. PERDUE, to replace the President's failed law with health care reform that puts patients and physicians back in charge of their health care decisions. The Empowering Patients First Act is companion legislation to a bill introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman TOM PRICE that would fully repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with solutions that put patients, families, and doctors back in charge of their medical decisions—not Washington bureaucrats.

It is past time for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to wake up to the reality that ObamaCare is the wrong solution to health care reform. Just consider a recent report by the Galen Institute which notes that since the President's health care law was

passed in 2010, it has undergone 70 significant changes through either acts of Congress, administrative actions, or the U.S. Supreme Court. Let me repeat that. ObamaCare has been changed a total of 70 times—in many cases through unilateral action—in order to protect the American people from its damaging effects.

I am as convinced today as I was 7 years ago when I stood on this floor to propose the first Republican amendment to ObamaCare that this law is the wrong approach to health care reform.

The bill I am reintroducing today would create policies that empower patients and doctors to take charge of their health care decisions, including by ensuring no one is priced out of the market, including individuals with pre-existing conditions; building on and expanding health savings accounts and other models to drive down costs; establishing age-adjusted tax credits for health insurance; equalizing tax treatment of employer-sponsored plans and plans purchased by individuals by letting individuals buy health insurance with pretax dollars; enhancing coverage options by letting small business owners band together across State lines through association health plans to create more affordable and comprehensive health care; letting consumers buy insurance across State lines; curbing defensive medicine and lawsuit abuse through tort reform; and making coverage more affordable by enabling individuals to own their insurance, like a 401(k) plan, so they can take it with them across State lines and if they change jobs. That only makes sense.

Americans deserve an alternative to the mandates, high costs, and bureaucratic mess that have been created by ObamaCare. The Empowering Patients First Act would repeal ObamaCare once and for all and replace it with health care reform that gives patients, families, and doctors the power to make medical decisions—not bureaucrats in Washington.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 367—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. COONS, Mr. THUNE, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 367

Whereas a competitive global economy requires workers who are trained in skilled professions;

Whereas, according to the National Association of Manufacturers, 80 percent of respondents indicated a moderate to severe shortage of qualified skilled production employees, including front-line workers such as machinists, operators, craft workers, distributors, and technicians;

Whereas career and technical education (referred to in this preamble as “CTE”) ensures that competitive and skilled workers are ready, willing, and capable of holding jobs in high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand career fields such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, nursing, allied health, construction, information technology, energy sustainability, and many other career fields that are vital in keeping the United States competitive in the global economy;

Whereas CTE helps the United States meet the very real and immediate challenges of economic development, student achievement, and global competitiveness;

Whereas approximately 14,000,000 students are enrolled in CTE across the country with CTE programs in nearly 1,300 public high schools and 1,700 2-year colleges;

Whereas of the 20 fastest growing occupations—

(1) 10 require an associate’s degree or a degree with fewer requirements;

(2) 13 with the largest numbers of new jobs projected require on-the-job training, an associate’s degree, or a certificate; and

(3) nearly all require real-world skills that can be mastered through CTE;

Whereas CTE matches employability skills with workforce demand and provides relevant academic and technical coursework leading to industry-recognized credentials for secondary, postsecondary, and adult learners;

Whereas CTE affords students the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills, and credentials needed to secure careers in growing, high-demand fields;

Whereas CTE students were significantly more likely than non-CTE student to report having developed problem-solving, project completion, research, math, college application, work-related, communication, time management, and critical thinking skills during high school; and

Whereas students at schools with highly integrated rigorous academic and CTE programs have significantly higher achievement in reading, mathematics, and science than students at schools with less integrated programs: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates February 2016 as “Career and Technical Education Month” to celebrate career and technical education across the United States;

(2) supports the goals and ideals of Career and Technical Education month;

(3) recognizes the importance of career and technical education in preparing a well-educated and skilled workforce in the United States; and

(4) encourages educators, counselors, and administrators to promote career and technical education as an option to students.

SENATE RESOLUTION 368—SUPPORTING EFFORTS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA TO PURSUE PEACE AND THE END OF THE COUNTRY’S ENDURING INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT AND RECOGNIZING UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR COLOMBIA AT THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF PLAN COLOMBIA

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. CORKER, and Mr. KAINE) submitted the

following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 368

Whereas, on October 1, 2000, President William Clinton, having worked with the support of Republican majorities in the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives, commenced implementation of the first United States foreign assistance package in support of Plan Colombia;

Whereas Plan Colombia has received steadfast commitments from the administrations of Presidents William Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, and continuously has been strengthened by broad bipartisan support in the United States Congress;

Whereas the United States Congress, through Plan Colombia, has appropriated more than \$9,000,000,000 in foreign assistance to support initiatives of the Government of Colombia to combat the illicit narcotics trade and terrorism, confront irregular armed actors, advance democratic governance, promote economic growth, defend human rights, and pursue a strategy towards sustainable peace;

Whereas the Government of Colombia, throughout the administrations of Presidents Andrés Pastrana, Álvaro Uribe, and Juan Manuel Santos, has made investments in Plan Colombia and carried out transformational efforts to consolidate domestic security, socioeconomic development, and the rule of law that far exceed those contributions made by the United States;

Whereas the United States and Colombia have forged a resolute bond through the implementation of Plan Colombia, which has been bolstered by the support of hundreds of thousands of Colombian-Americans and their contribution to American life;

Whereas, over the past 15 years, levels of crime and violence have subsided sharply in Colombia, with annual per capita homicide rates declining from 62 per 100,000 people in 1999 to 27 per 100,000 people in 2014, and the annual number of kidnappings decreasing from more than 3,000 in 1999 to less than 300 in 2014;

Whereas the alignment of improved security and sound economic policies has translated into steady growth in Colombia’s Gross Domestic Product, which increased from \$86,000,000,000 in 1999 to more than \$377,000,000,000 in 2014, and led to greater Foreign Direct Investment, which grew from \$1,500,000,000 in 1999 to one of the highest in Latin America at \$16,000,000,000 in 2014;

Whereas the Government of Colombia has made impressive strides in reducing poverty during the last 15 years, with the poverty rate decreasing from 64 percent in 1999 to 28.5 percent in 2014, according to the World Bank;

Whereas, since 1999, the Government of Colombia has expanded the presence of the state across all 32 territorial departments, has contributed to the professionalism of the Colombian judiciary, and has improved the capacity of the Colombian Army, Navy, Air Force, and National Police;

Whereas, in November 2012, the Government of Colombia entered into talks to negotiate an end to the country’s enduring conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a guerilla movement that has ties to the illicit narcotics trade, has kidnapped Colombian and United States civilians, and has been designated by the United States Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization;

Whereas a half-century of conflict has taken a devastating toll on Colombia’s civilian population, has claimed the lives of more than 220,000 people, and has left more than